



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXXII

NOVEMBER, 1908

NUMBER 5

Editorial

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

A REVIVAL OF INTEREST IN IMMORTALITY

We are not without indications of a reviving interest in immortality. The inviting mysteries of psychic research and the real but unmeasured spiritual potency of man, together with certain extreme reactions from materialism, are serving to arrest, in part, the crass and dominant practicality of recent times. In view of this incipient revival of an interest which has commanded the reverent consideration of thinkers, ancient and modern, we turn with no little expectation to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. "The relation between the resurrection of Jesus and the belief in immortality" is discussed from divergent points of view, in the October number of *The American Journal of Theology*, by Professor Fenn of Harvard Divinity School and President Mackenzie of Hartford Theological Seminary.

VARIANT VIEWS OF RESURRECTION AND IMMORTALITY

Dr. Fenn analyzes the Christian views of immortality and also of the resurrection for the purpose of showing the interplay of the two distinct ideas of spiritual immortality and the reanimation of the body. He finds practically three types of Christian belief in immortality: first, the idea of spiritual and personal continuance in life apart from the disintegration of the body; second, the view that bodyless consciousness is impossible and that any future life depends upon the reanimation of the body; and, third (a combination of the first and second), the belief in independent psychical continuance plus the assurance of a suitable bodily outfit related somehow to that of the present. Two views of the resurrection of Jesus are pointed out: first, that of reanimation and transformation of his body; and second,

that of his spiritual survival and influence upon the minds of the apostles. It is shown that the bodily resurrection of Jesus cannot prove the immortality of the soul but may, nevertheless, constitute a possibility of immortality by means of such a resurrection. But this significance for believers or for all men is considered to depend logically upon the similarity of Jesus to other men and is weakened in the degree in which he is considered unique as the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity. In fact, for the influence of any view of his resurrection upon any conception of immortality "his experience becomes predictive only upon the denial of his uniqueness." The doctrine of spiritual resurrection is held to strengthen belief in spiritual immortality and to militate against the necessity of bodily reanimation.

Professor Fenn shows that immortality in the historical rise of the belief was independent of the resurrection, while he indicates at the same time how the resurrection of Jesus filled the dreary outlook of the ancients with a positive quality of hope. But as a logical proof of immortality the traditional view of the resurrection is considered as practically valueless.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT INADEQUATE

On the other hand President Mackenzie, while also recognizing the historic priority and wide prevalence of immortality, emphasizes the illumination and vital power which the resurrection of Jesus imparted, and he contends further that disbelief in his resurrection as a historical certainty would hopelessly maim philosophical argument for the future life and would paralyze, as well, adequate incentives to right living in the present. However, upon ethical, historical, and theistic grounds he presents in a strong way the demand for immortality, but claims that all such speculation was of no value for the multitude and possessed no vital power until the "vision of the risen Christ flung its light over all other views of God and salvation."

The uniqueness of Jesus is advocated to the point of breaking for others the significance of his resurrection, while no successful attempt is made, after the Pauline fashion, to constitute his resurrection the proof of his claims and of his consequent power to bestow a like gift upon believers. The accepted view of the resurrection is that of endowment with a physical body constituted superior to physical

laws, a magical instrument for the soul, the transformation of the earthly body into the heavenly by the direct action of God. Faith in the resurrection is made requisite for salvation, and the doctrine is held to be central not only in confirmation of immortality but for the whole structure of the Christian faith.

RISE OF THE BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

These two important articles give rise to certain reflections which, in the nature of the case, can only approach but not reach fixed conclusions. Belief in immortality may have causal relation to belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus in two ways. First, if the Greek idea of spiritual immortality had already become prevalent in later Hebrew thought then it is possible that this larger belief in immortality constituted the philosophic basis upon which the unique exhibition of life after death was made possible in the case of Jesus. Or, on the contrary, the very lack of belief in spiritual immortality may have necessitated the idea of bodily resurrection to take its place in order to secure participation in the earthly messianic reign with its rewards and penalties. This latter alternative is the more likely for Judaistic and early Christian thinking, if indeed the Greek conception of immortality did not prevail in the synagogue until after the time of Maimonides. So that the absence of belief in spiritual immortality is seen to favor belief in bodily resurrection and hence in the resurrection of Jesus.

Conversely, belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, in so far as it has been the product of religious provincialism and an attempt to make permanent the earthly stage of the soul process, is unfavorable to the more speculative type of spiritual immortality, for it assumes the exhaustion of divine possibilities in the material conditions and organisms of this present world and predicates that fulness of life is impossible apart from these or similar organisms. It follows that the resurrection may be considered as a tether upon immortality serving to keep it from losing its way and fading out in the great unknown spaces. Very naturally, speculative minds will not feel the full value of this restraint and may even resent it; while, at the same time, the majority of Christians will continue to find satisfaction in that event which for them holds the immortal hope more nearly within the necessary limits of human experience past and present.